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ABSTRACT

Findings of a study that examined the characteristics of women principals in Israel, as compared with research findings of the 1960s and 70s, are presented in this paper. Data were derived from interviews, questionnaires, and the written autobiographies of 36 aspiring or practicing women principals in Israel. Findings suggest that, overall, the role of career planning and aspiration in attaining the principalship was ambiguous. The respondents' leadership styles, based on interpersonal relations and communication--traits that have traditionally been viewed as weaknesses, contributed to school effectiveness and positive school climates. Motherhood experiences served as a resource for the principalship. Characteristics that may predict attainment of the position include diligence, a need for change, and the capacity to turn hardships into challenges. Recommendations are made to provide organizational/professional support and to encourage the view of career as not contradictory to femininity. (Contains 38 references.) (LMI)

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TRANSITION FROM TEACHER TO PRINCIPAL:

AN ISRAELI WOMEN PERSPECTIVES

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TRANSITION FROM TEACHER TO PRINCIPAL: AN ISRAELI WOMEN PERSPECTIVES

INTRODUCTION

During the last ten years a slow but consistent process has emerging in Israel. More women are becoming school principals, especially at the elementary school level. Most of them are teachers, with many years' experience, and were selected as principals on account of their instructional leadership skills and administrative training.

The goal of this paper is to study the characteristics of women principals in Israel. Since this is a new trend of the 1980's, it enables us to deepen our understanding of the femaile characteristics of Israeli women principals and to compare and contrast them with those of women principals reported in earlier research in the 1960's and 1970's in other contexts. The paper takes a feminist approach to the values and leadership attributes that characterize women principals. The group studied in Israel included mainly new women principals and some women making the transition to school principalship. All of the women were closely engaged in the transitional phase in their career.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research published since the 1970's explains women's underepresentation in school headship by socialization of stereotype sex roles in general (Schein, 1975) and in education (Tarburg,1977) and sex discrimination, specially in business management (Safilios-Rothschild, 1979). Female characteristics were given as explanation for the low job status and for the small

number of women entering management positions (Riger & Galligan, 1980). These characteristics concern female personality trait stereotypes and sex role and occupational stereotypes. These indicate that male personal and professional characteristics are needed for good manegement, whereas feminine characteristics are perceived as obstacles to this. For example, research literature indicates that women have less expectations for advancement and are less ambitious by nature (Globerzon, 1977; Katz, 1988); they were defind as "lacking qualification " for administration, and therefore not considered as candidates for leadership position (McGrath, 1992). Generally, they are not as persistent as men (Paddock, 1980), and their self-perception as being unsuitable for management serves to inhibit decisions on a management career (Terborg, 1977). Women also tend less then men to state their professional aspirations sometimes even denying their being ambitious (Evettes,1987). Such perception, particularly by men, creates and explains discrimination. Furthermore, personality traits or behavior patterns that are contrary to the demands of managerial role were also found unsuitable for leadership roles (Henning & Jardim, 1977). This applies, for example, to having an inner drive to avoid success (Horner, 1972; Riger & Galligan, 1982), or women's lacking managerial skills or behaviors as a result of differential sex role socialization.

In general, the research reports on female characteristics such as self-evaluation and performance expectancies, and female behaviors such as lacking self-confidence, being uncertain, non-competitive, conformist, submissive dependent and passive as obstacles for gaining leadership roles (Adkison, 1981). Other characteristics indicate that fewer women than men aspired to administration roles, and women were found to lack career planning and career motivation. Home and family responsibilities, particularly child-bearing, created barriers for women and were perceived as obstacles in gaining leadership positions (Evets, 1987).

Lately, research influenced by women's movements has encouraged publication of feminist points of view (Galligan, 1982). These include the emergence of a different socialization perception for administration roles on the one hand (Adkison,1981) and the description of the personal and professional development of women teachers on the other (Fessler & Christensen, 1992).

The early research on women principals was conducted in America with women who began their administrative role in the 1960's and 1970's, and therefore it reflects the social and economic situation of that time.
Since the mid-1980, women's status in general has changed. For example, in academic credentials and certification there are no longer major sex differences (Sadker, Sadker & Klein, 1991). Women have made greater job seeking efforts and have increased their applications for administrators' positions. At the same time, women have received more distinct encouragement and overall have a higher likelihood of being hired as principals than previously. Research on women principals found that they were highly motivated, and determined and wanted to reach their personal limits to improve schools (Edson, 1980). Nowadays more women are undoubtedly on their way to principalship, and a large number of women will be vying for top administrative positions in the next decade than ever before (McGrath, 1992). On the whole, the issue has gained importance (Adkison,1981). The definition and meaning of principalship, which formerly was based solely on "male models" is going through major theoretical and practical revisions.

Subtle structural issues like new visions of leadership based on female and humanist principles are in focus. Research is attempting to identify new attributes and behaviors of female principals that contribute to effective principalship and better schools. Findings indicate that female principals were more effective than male (Gross and Trask, 1976), and that rather than lacking leadership skills, women have the "right stuff" for

principalship (McGrath, 1992). They posses values of concern for other people, and they apply a more democratic, participative style of leadership than men. They demonstrate high levels of skill in community problem solving, organizational savvy, team-building instruction and curriculum (Gradenswarty & Rowe, 1987). It is also reported that women focus on teaching and learning, and use outside resources to apply new ideas to improve instruction. They are more effective in representing the school and working with the community (Sadker et al, 1991; Shakeshaft, 1980).

As mentioned earlier, most of this research is in the American context and we lack information of other cultural contexts. Moreover, this study used autobiography, questionnaires and interviews. Autobiography was found specially appropriate for women, as it enables them to tell their own story in their own way without the interference of any pre-planend tool, and to reveal the deep dynamic layers of being a woman professional principal. Listening to the "teacher's voice" in education stems from the term "voice" originated in the work of Galligan (1982).
Autobiography is a relatively new methodology which emphasizes the personal nature of knowledge (Butt & Raynolds, 1989; Raymond & Surprenant, 1988), and was found culturally relevant for Israeli women (Lieblich, 1986).

The study aims to investigate several questions:
(1) What are the female themes that women principals in Israel evince when reflecting on the transition in their careers? Are these reflections unique or similar to other cultural contexts?
(2) To what extent are these themes, attributes and characteristics congruent with the current ideas about effective leadership?
(3) What motivated these women teachers to undergo the administrative training and climb the career ladder to become school principals?

METHOD

All of the 36 women in this study came from an elementary school teaching background. Their seniority ranged from eight to twenty six years. They were all selected by the Israeli Ministry of Education to participate in an in-service administrative training course of 300 hours.

While most of the participants were already in their first years of principalship or served as deputy to the principal, graduating this course was a requisite for being certified as a principal. During the course the women participants were asked, as part of their academic requirments, to write an autobiography on their career.

Their written product ranged from four to fifteen pages in length. Following Erickson's (1986) notion that "While in quantitative social research concepts tend to be pre-formed and fixed, in qualitative research they tend to be fluid and emergent," we did not suggest apriori operationally defined hypotheses, and interpretive modes of search were utilized (Blumer, 1979, p.653).

The written material of the autobiographies is an important source of information (Butt,1985), and these were content-analyzed using a thought unit as the unit of analysis (Fox,1969). Each content unit was categorized into topics, which were counted and then grouped in broad categories of content reference.

The findings are presented with many quotes from the autobiographies, so "the voice of the women" as teacher and principal could be heard, and could be treated in the sense of her life experience.

FINDINGS

This section has three parts: First, the voice of the future principal as a former teacher are presented alongside the themes that are common in teachers' career stages and life descriptions. Second are themes that emerged as unique to women principals.

Third, characteristics that caused these women to aspire to school principalship will be emphasized. The last part of this section summarizes the findings in a table.

A. The principal as the former teacher

The autobiographies described in great detail the years when the women worked as teachers before becoming principals or deputy to the principal. So themes that are typical of teachers' life histories, such as career entry, survival, diversification and change,"stock taking," etc. (Sikes, 1985; Oberg & Field, 1986; Huberman, 1990) were outlined. These indicated the teachers' life trajectories, and described their professional developmental and career stages one by one dynamically from the day they entered the teaching profession, through the building of their competency and times of frustration or stagnation to their becoming school principals.

These descriptions show the many changes that occur within the individual teacher's life, changes in personal and professional events, in educational needs and in the requirements of responsibility. From the way the women principals described these stages it is evident that their professional life was not detached from their personal life:

"In my first years I established my educational work in the class...then I went through a crisis, in which I examined my attitudes, my educational principles, and my modes of teaching. Subsequently came years of study, and assignments to various roles in school, and then I began my search for new challenges..."

The principals wrote extensively about their enter into the teaching profession. Some remembered it as a delightful time while others recalled it as difficult.

"The first stage was very inspirational in my work. I enjoyed meeting the children and the staff, and the interaction with parents. I was very enthusiastic..."
"I didn't have any discipline problems. The children cooperated, and studied seriously, which helped my self-confidence..."
"Work was very difficult...reality proved to be different from the theories I had learned...I was asking myself many questions and didn't find all the answers..."
"The first moment is very difficult. You are inspected, and your abilities are checked constantly..".

In sum, as teachers for several years before becoming principals the professional developmental stages of the later are a meaningful part of their life histories. The autobiographies reflect many topics that come up frequently in teachers' life stories.

B. Principals' female characteristics

We are aware of sexual stereotypes that refer to widespread beliefs concerning sex differences on various personality traits. Some of these characteristics were manifest in the autobiographies and were perceived by the women themselves as weaknesses. We will address some of these characteristics as follows:

(1) Aspiration versus lack of aspiration: Entering principalship

Two different styles of entry into principalship were identified in the study. The first was a "natural" professional development path, whereby teachers became deputies to principals, and when the principals retired or left they became principals themselves.
The second style is marked by a situation in which "someone" from the outside proposed that the teacher become principal perhaps the incumbent principal or the superintendant. This usually took the

teacher by surprise. She herself, she stated, never considered it, and her own wish or ambition to become a principal had never been raised previosly.
"I was offered the job ofrunning the school...I never thought of becoming a principal....I did not crave it....The nomination took me by surprise..."

The women described their worries and stresses in deciding whether to accept or refuse the offer. "I pondered a lot whether or not to accept the offer..."
"It flattered me, and yet i had to think about it over and over again..."
"I had a rough time weighing up and reviewing all the argument...."

They talked about their anxieties and fears, which arose from insecurity and low self-esteem, and fear of losing the staff's empathy in if they became principals:
"I could not see myself appropriate for the job...I thought I had not got the right ability for it..."

A different style was found in the study. In this, women principals dared to talk about professional aspirations and about advancing their careers. They displayed confidence in their personal and professional abilities, unconcerned about their feminine image:
"My interest in principalship expanded...Following various roles in school I began to consider many aspects in a broader and more integrative way... I felt an interest in the matters and functions of principalship..."
"I feel I possess the abilities to run a school and wrestle with all the matters it embraces..."

"It was important for me to prove myself as a principal..."
"When I was offered the principalship I felt that the time was right and I had enough confidence in my ability to lead and support the staff....."

In sum, two ways to become a principal were specified. Bboth suggest that the teachers themselves did not aspire or plan to become principals, and that it happened through external forces.

(2) Doubts and insecurity versus self-discovery and strength

Doubts concerning the women's personal and professional abilities were revealed in the autobiographies. They described their doubts when offered a new assignment, specifically when becoming principals:
" I wanted to test myself...Was I talented enough? Was I efficient?"
"I realized that being a good teacher does not mean having the right skills for becoming a good principal..."
"Perhaps I had not chosen the appropriate profession...Maybe I would never be a success as a principal..."
"Suppose I am a bad and inexpert teacher...?"

The women also show their professional insecurity by perceiveing, stereotypically, leadership roles as associated with power, strength and control, and linking principalship to authority and rigorousness. Believing the absence of these two characteristics to be a female trait, they perceived this to be a disadvantage and an explanation for finding sometimes themselves unsuitable as school principal:
"I lack assertiveness and authority...I feel paralyzed, and I prefer conceding to struggling."
"A principal needs a rigorous image, and I am very quiet and unassuming. It's hard for me to be rigorous..."

The women found difficulties in changing from being a colleague on the staff to an authoritative professional:
"My problem was how to behave with my colleagues when I moved to the other side and had to exert authority..."

The autobiographies reveal in the women principals strong emphasis on the need for approval and support from family and collegues and for acknowledgement of their work, specially from their superiors. Sometimes these needs turn into dependancy:

"Support came from my husband and mother-in-law, who encouraged me along the way to study and progress..."
"The fact that the superintendents appreciated my work pleased and flattered me..."
"Support was a necessity for me ..."
"I'm sure, that if not for the reinforcement and support that I got all along the way, from the principal, the parents and the pupils, I would have left the teaching profession..."
"The positive feedback I receivd caused me happiness, and gave me strength to advance..."

Concern and anxiety as dominant famale traits were underlined by the women principals, but some turned these into a powerful force. On becoming principals they "discovered" their inner firmness, new qualities, skills and abilities they did not think they possessed. They felt positively excited about the revelation, and enjoyed it thoroughly.
"I discovered qualities that were concealed in me before"...
"I felt myself growing and developing, and a strong will to move mountains..."
"The feelimg of being an influential person gave me strength and authority to work and contribute..."
"I felt I had the qualifications to direct a school and undertake the variety of matters a principal has to deal with...."

"I find that I am capable and a talented leader. It's a diversified profession, with great possibilities for change. In it one can find pleasure and satisfaction..."

Generally, two different themes emerge from the autobiographies. One highlighted doubts about womens' ability, professional insecurity, and a strong need for support; the other related to self-discovery and professional assurance.

(3) The significance of interaction and communication for women principals.

Women tend to regard reality as a net work relations based on mutual affectionate feelings (Gilligan, 1983). They also may consider personal relationships, and the form of communication with others an important source of job satisfaction.
Teaching is a profession based on relationships, specifically on interaction between the teacher and her clients at all levels: pupils, parents, teacher-colleagues, the principal, and the superintendent. As such, communication and interactions are a very meaningful factor in teachers' and principals' lives. The more positively one conceives one's relationships and interactions with others, the more one feels successful in one's profession and is involved in school life (Riger & Galligan, 1980).
In the autobiographies the principals elaborated on relationships, communications and interaction with pupils, parents, colleagues, consultants, and others:
"I had a special relationship with parents...visiting their homes, helping them..."
"I developed special relationships with my pupils..."
"I had good relations with some of my colleages...Working together and helping each other in planning and with materials
gave me great pleasure and satisfaction"...
"I felt good with my collegues...feeling that you are wanted and that your help is needed was very important for me..."

"My relations with pupils and parents were excellent..."

The principals outlined their conceptions of principalship as stemming from deep concern for the staff and their wish to achieve cooperation with their teachers. They objected to viewing principalship as a "one-man/woman job":
"I prefer to work in teams and with cooperation..."
"It is important for me to build the right relationship and cooperation with the staff and with the workers..."

But on the other hand closeness is problematic, because:
"I felt that the teachers were testing me....I wondered where the boundaries were...I wanted to retain the friendly atmosphere, but at the same time to do the best I could in my job...How can one integrate both?

The needs for team-work and cooperation with the staff were stressed, but the principals were aware of the dilemma it arouses: It is not a simple task to work closley with colleages and in the same time withhold onse' authority. This is one of the main challenges of feminine leadership - be a "boss", and be a friend. The responsibility of one's role demands sometimes risking the liking and acceptance of peers.

(4) Motherhood: a resource for principalship

Homelife and personal needs put pressure on the woman in many ways: allocation of time, energy needed for her many tasks, and use of her resources. Often, family demands conflicted with job-related requirements.
Conflicts can also arise from the incompatibility between the woman's perception of her role and the role ascribed to her by relevant others.
This dualism, as expected, was expressed by the women in the study in many ways. However, interestingly, women said they always felt

the mutuality and meeting points between home and career. There were times when family demands were subordinated to career needs. At other times, they realized that they could draw from work all the energy needed to cope with family challenges:

"For many years the most important thing for me was my family and home...Trying to avoid harming the family I gave up many aspects of my individual development...I consciously put off my own advancement until the right time came for the family.

"I got married and we moved to a new town...I had to get used to being a housewife...My professional life was determinated by the changes in my personal life..."

"A turning point in my life - divorce - forced me to look for a new place, a new way, and new educational roles..."

"Family situations can encourage or halt you...bachelorhood helps. Parting from a friend is difficult. It holds you back. Marriage is a burden but it also brings you peacefulness.... A husband helps and supports, but at the same time often holds you back and complains..."

"My family life accommodated my professional life...In the past my work supported me as a person, now my familylife supported my professional career. It is a very rare equilibrium..."

While family life was perceived as complementary to professional life, most women wrote extensively on the struggle between the need and wish to be more with their children. To be a devoted mother was hard to accommodate with the many responsibilities of work. They wrote about their frustrations, guilt, and at times hard feelings. They expressed their search for balance.

"Very often I felt guilty about leaving two children for my own sake, to study and build my personal career...."

"I didn't find equilibrium between my work and being a mother and wife...I can't stand the pressure of work and family life..."

A very intresting theme, repeated in many of the women's autobiographies, was the significance of the leave of absence they

took after giving birth. In Israel, working mothers are paid three months' salary after having a baby. Many women take a full year of leave. All their professional rights are retained. This was viewed, quite surprisingly, as one of the most positive periods of the women's professional growth. They regarded that year as legitimizingtheir taking some time for themselves and considering alternatives. This leave of absence, with a newborn child, was often seen as time for renewal and professional refreshing. For some of them this particular time became a professional turning point. It is noteworthy that most women became principals after having their children:

"I gave birth and took a years leave...In that time I read a lot and renewed and updated my knowledge...Coming back to school began a new period in my professional life..."

"Having a baby and staying at home for a year gave me an opportunity to look back on my professional life and find out my real new career needs..."

Motherhood had a positive influence on the women's professional life as teachers or principals. They wrote about themselves as becoming softer, more sensitive towards children, more effective and more flexible in most school-related issues. However, motherhood changed a many these perspectives, and some-times they found themselves less willing to fight for their ideas and principles because they were occupied by "more important things in the family domain:

"My approach to objectives and how to obtain them had changed..."

"I developed extra sensitivity towards children, and could sense things in their behavior that I could not before..."

"I learned a lot from motherhood regarding relations with parents...I experienced what it feels being a parent."

"I have changed...I became more patient, considerate, understanding, indulgent and capable of giving warmth and love...."

"I was bothered and busy as a mother, so it was unconvenient for me to undertake school matters..."

In sum, feminine characteristics emerged from the autobiographies when the women wrote about becoming a principal and about their concerns over holding an authoritative position. They wrote extensively about becoming mothers and about motherhood. Characteristics such as career planning , confidence in their professional abilities and applying authority were not unambiguous while the significance of interaction and communication and the attitude to motherhood were clear cut.

C. CHARACTERISTICS FOR "CLIMBING THE PROFESSIONAL LADDER".

One major question to examine in analyzing the autobiographies was the unique qualities in the women that motivated them to climb the professional ladder and become school principals. Were these environmental factors, or their own personalit, or a combination of both?
Three areas emerged, related to personal traits and characteristics, external environmental factors, and the combination of the two.

(1) Personal traits and characteristics

Reviewing their past as teachers, all the principals described themselves, as very hard workers. They wrote of the many hours they put into their work and the great amount of thoughts emotion, and energy they invested in it. They felt overworked, and always doing above and beyond and what was required of them. They underlined the fact that school- related work was a central part of life:
"I worked with all my heart.... endless hours."

"I spent so much time and energy in the school."
"I used to sit with pupils after school finished, for many hours."
"I used to come back from school every day, exhausted and worn out...all of me immersed in my work.."
"School entity with it is complexity is a dominant part of my life..."
"I treat school as to a home and not just a place of work."
"I didn't give up...I explained to my family that I would never give up my work..."

Inner urge for change was identified as an additional characteristic of the Israeli women principals. They all noted that when they reached a stage of stability in their profession it made them restless, dissatisfied, frustrated and unfulfilled. Instead of being comfortable with this stability, they felt a strong need for challenge and change.
In the autobiographies the women principals described a fear of stagnation and boredom, if they remained only in teaching. This concern impelled them forward to look for new challenges, to take new initiatives, and to become committed to new roles or to furthering their academic studies. These were the ways for moving out of this non-dynamic period:
"I began to feel satiety....so I tried to break through into new constructs..."
"I felt my work is not creative enough for me and that I was not able to derive satisfaction out of it...I had to make some changes...
"I'm not able to repeat myself...I love to change things and learn, and try out every new and crazy idea..."
"The greatest threat for me is habit..."
"The drive to make changes and to experiment with diverse activities characterizes me. These contribute to my professional development"

To sum up, the most salient characteristics of women principals were hard work, perceiving school-related work as the center of life, feeling uncomfortable with stability and looking for dynamics of change and further professional development.

(2) Environmental factors

Further exploration of the autobiographies disclosed the women principals' life trajectories, which were affected by challenging personal and professional life events and by professional development, changing types of schools, moving from teaching lower grades to upper grades, struggling with a difficult and demanding group of students in the class, and working in a school that had many social problems were some examples they gave of significent professional events in their life stories. They also indicated some personal transitional events in their lives as having a strong effect on their career. Those included divorce, death of a family member, financial crisis, war, and facing security problems:

"To start from the beginning was not easy... In three years to move three times from school to school. This was as difficult as a new beginnings. For me each problem was a challenge...The harder I worked the more I enjoyed it..."

"I struggled with various tasks....every day a new challenge.. I promised myself not to worry..."

"In these changes one has worries...It's a question of success or failure...I had to prove myself..."

"Every change, each role brought forth a restoring breeze in everyday life, and made life sometimes harder, but more intresting.."

"After the tragedy in our settlement with the terorists, I had to pull myself together and start again. I was not easy... but it was a challenge...."

Our principals perceived struggling with situations and changes as turning points providing a challenge for growth and maturation that promote their professional development.

(3) Combination of environmental and personal factors

Most of the women took undertook school-wide responsibilities and this level of involvement was very intensive. They all occupied pivotal roles on their schools' central committees or headed committees. Other responsibilities listed were being in charge of the laboratory, consulting and assisting beginning teachers, coordinating subjects and many more.
In general they gradually became involved in additional duties and roles, and so climbed the professional ladder, gaining status and recognition. Many defined themselves as initiators, and wrote about their urge to create new activities at school and to operate special projects. Eventually, they come to work closely with their principal (usually male) and got some exposure to this role:
"I used to work all the time with the principal...offering suggestions, proposing solutions to problems that arose....I was active in everything that concerned school."
"I was the assistant principal in school....In her absence I was in charge of everything at school.."
"I started as a teacher but very soon I was in charge of the upper grades....Two years later I was part of the school leading committee, and later I became the deputy to the principal."

Most participants had a history of participating in many in-service workshops and courses in various areas and subjects, such as computer studies, geography, art, history, new curriculum in mathematics, teaching drama, using alternative methods, special education, dancing, etc. Some engaged academic studies at universities or in teachers'-colleges toward a B.A. or B.Ed degree. Most of them advanced from one course to another.

"I felt a strong need for learning..."
"I always found myself learning something, participating in a course or a workshop.... I felt I had to go on, go forward, learn somthing new and develop."

These themes disclose characteristics which can be looked upon as motivators for professional growth and which may explain the uniqueness of our research population: teachers who climbed the career ladder to become school principals.

D. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

(A) THE PRINCIPAL AS THE FORMER TEACHER

* Teachers' professional development stages and trajectories
* Emphasis on the entry stage

(B) PRINCIPALS' FEMALE CHARACTERISTICS

(1) Aspiration versus lack of aspiration

* Two styles of career choice and becoming a principal

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(2) Doubts and insecurity versus self discovery and strength

* Uncertainty and insecurity
* Perceiving lack of rigorousness and authority, as disadvantage for principalship.
* Need for support and acknowledgement
* Self-discovery.

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(3) The significance of interaction and communication for women principals

* The need for interaction
* Emphasis on team work

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(4) Motherhood: a resource for principalship

* Role conflict
* Search for equilibrium
* Leave of absence after giving birth - a privilege
* New qualities and professional development

(C) CHARACTERISTICS FOR CLIMBING THE PROFESSIONAL LADDER

(1) Personal traits and characteristics

* Being a hard worker
* The need for change

---

(2) Environmental factors

* Changes in personal and professional life events - a challenge

---

(3) Combination between environmental and personal factors

* Climbing the educational role ladder
* Being a permanent learner

DISCUSSION

The study sheds light on the characteristics of potential women principals in Israel. Intrestingly, these seem to be universal, with family/career dual conceptions (Claesson & Brice, 1989). We will consider four main topics that were stressed in the autobiographies. The first pertains to the principal as former teacher, the second to female characteristics regarding leadership style and behavior. The third topic deals with the privilege of being a mother and the fourth with certain characteristics as predictors for climbing the career ladder.

Being a principal - being a former teacher

"Women at all levels of administration are older than men in similar positions, ...and have more classroom experience" (McGarth, 1992; Paddock, 1980; Frasher & Frasher, 1979).

Our women principals had just begun principalship, and still retained in their minds their years of teaching. They drew on their knowledge, skills and behaviors from those experiences, and very often viewed school matters from the teachers' point of view. It was intresting to learn, that in Israel, as in the U.S., women enter principalship after long teaching experience; their career stages resembled those of their American and European women counterparts, and the themes common in American women teachers' life-histories were usual for the Israeli women-principals as well (Greenfield & Beam, 1980; Sikes, 1985; Fessler & Christensen; 1992 Huberman, 1989,1990).

In conformity with the research literature that stresses career entry as a crucial stage in teachers' lives (Ball & Goodson, 1985), our beginning principals recalled the first stage of their careers as unique and significant in their lives. Furthermore, in the autobiographies the account of their years as teachers predominated.

In the review of the transition to principalship, the question of career planning, getting to the top, and becoming a principal was widely mentioned. Concerning women's lack of career planning, our study reinfoced research findings that empasize women's self-perception, insecurity, and lower self-evaluation of abilities as inhibitors of career planning and deciding on a career in management (Terborg, 1977; Adkison, 1981). However, as mentioned in the literature, nowadays there are women who are not hesitant or reluctant to face the challenge of principalship; they pursue it, and do not conform to sexual stereotype. They show ambition, assertiveness and a realistic assessment of administration as career (Edson, 1980; Globerzon, 1977). The notion of career planning is partly true, as in the Israeli society more women principals are to be found who aspire to principalship, expressly declaring their ambition; they are not troubled about their feminine image. But on the whole, as the literature indicates, with Israeli principals the question of career planing and career aspiration is still ambiguous.

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The advantage of female characteristics

The findings reflect notions of personal and professional insecurity, self-doubt, unassertiveness and even dependence on external factors which are conceived as feminine traits. But do doubts or uncertainties imply inefficiency? Or perhaps, on the contrary, one can seek these as motivational factors for development, advancement and progress? Are insufficient rigorousness and authority a disadvantage? Or perhaps these women possess diverse qualifications, talents and capacities, which they can use alternatively?. Furthermore, they may choose these behaviors because they perceive that specific behaviors will be rewarded (Riger & Galligan, 1980).

Based on analyses of women's leadership style, the term "school leadership" experiences major transformation in its theoretical aspects. Here we have a unique example proving that the term "leadership" was defined, structured and studied within the male perspectives. Traits not defined as belonging to men's leadership were defined as "deficiencies", and deemed characteristics of "non-leaders" characteristics. Only when women became educational leaders did it transpire that those feminine "deficiences" were indeed powerful traits of an effective school leadership (Schmack, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1992).

Since women have less chance of advancement their sources of satisfaction do not come just from the job itself, but from the quality of their relations with co-workers (Riger & Galligen, 1980). This seemed clear from the autobiographies. The Israeli woman principal's leadership style is based on relation and communication, relating mainly to people, and not relating to a product. This style showed potential to produce better outcomes in certain work situations (Robie, 1973), and was proven to produce a more democratic and cooperative workplace. It was also proven that women leaders in school administration constantly contribut to the effectiveness of schools' outcomes and create a positive school climate (Frasher & Frasher, 1979).

The Israeli women teachers were aware of the advantage of being a female principal. Feminine characteristics, such as insecurity, lack of authority or rigorousness, the ability to communicate, to cooperate, and to engage in team work are all valued as a professional advantage, and found to make a unique contribution to effective principalship. It seems that these "feminine weaknesses" are changeable when required, and in other times they can be turned into advantages. By becoming principals the women awoke to tacit qualities they weren't aware they possesed.

On the whole, these findings strengthen the evidence indicating that good school principalship has more feminine than masculine characteristics (Frasher & Frasher, 1979).

Being a mother and a professional

Women are sociologically androgynous as they perform in their lives and accommodate two main jobs: professional career and family responsibilities (Liblich, 1986).
How to cope effectively with the conflicting demands that arise from these two roles is a dominant issue in research literature (Feldman, 1976; Van Maanen & Scheir, 1977; Katz, 1988; Sieber, 1974).
The reader should recall that Israeli society is highly family oriented, and has kong retained the ethos of the "Jewish mother"; essentially Israeli women seem to be more family oriented than American women, and with less career ambition.
Most of the women are wives and mothers and have 2-4 children.
Today, women are generaly being given increasing opportunities and one can find more principals with more resources than in the past; but Israeli society still lacks resources, and provides a very limited support system to help the working woman to cope with her problems (Katz, 1988). Still, Israeli women perceived motherhood as a privilege and contribution to their career planning and career development. They wrote about the leave of absence they

took while becoming mothers. This gave them the opportunity to return to teaching after reconsidering and reestimating their situation. Men do not have such a time for stock-taking, reckoning, and contemplating, and as indicating in this study it is a privilege and an advantage for professional growth.

Characteristics that predict principalship

It seems that those who succeed in climbing the career ladder shared certain features. First, they seemed to be specially diligent and dedicated to their work. Consciously or unconsciously, they saw their work as adominant part of their life, they took it as a challenge, and invested in it a great deal of their time, energy, and strength. Like American women principals Israeli women also evinced a deep professional commitment (Gross & Trask, 1976). Second, they possessed an inner urge for change, they sought challenges, and they tried to avoid stagnation. They felt their inner development, professionally and personally; they grew as human beings, and as professionals they acquired those qualities that assisted them in the skills they needed in their new role.

It would be interesting to learn whether the need for change is a personality trait that influences teachers' professional development or the result of environmental or professional organizational factors.

Third, the women principals experienced hardships in their lives. These brought about changes that challenged them and were perceived externally or internally as very imported turning points.

They served as a catalyst for struggle, striving, coping and growing. They coused a need in the women to search for new solutions to meet the challenges.

The last characteristic relates to the search for knowledge and the lifelong need for learning. The women described how they gathered knowledge and energy to prevail. Most of them thought

that wrestling with external or internal factors of change developed them as people and as professionals.

It may be concluded that to reach the top of the career ladder, one has to start with various central organizational roles, through which one acquires the proper skills that leadership requires. Knowledge through formal and informal studies is the ultimate central component for development, success and advancement.

The results suggest that there is a need to encourage women to think about career as a positive quality that does not contradict femininity.
Another need is attention to the concerns of women- principals. First, they should realize that these are universal; second, and more important, future principals should be provided with management skills while they are still teaching, to correct sexual stereotypes and to promote their unique style of principalship, which derives from their feminine characteristics.
On the organizational level, there is a need to construct the appropriate organizational and professional support systems for women principals. Examples are coaching beginning principals and constructing the proper mechanisms to enable the woman to stay at work the whole day without worrying about her family.

Several questiones emerge from this study for further research:
- Is there correlation between a healthy career entry and becoming a principal?
- Are the characteristics mentioned in the study that predict principalship?
- Which of these characteristics are culturelly bound?
- Is it possible to identify characteristics that will make a person a good principal?

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